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SUBJECT: TIP INTERIM ASSESSMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

REF: SECSTATE 228458

1. The following responses are geared to reftel questions. Post believes the DRC has made credible progress on its outstanding issues, and we will continue to stress to the GDRC the importance of doing so.

2. In May 2004, the GDRC finalized and implemented procedures for issuing official demobilization certificates for children associated with armed groups. Although a small number of demobilized child soldiers have not received their certificates, in general, the process is working well.

3. Since October 2003, the GDRC has demobilized about 2,000 children associated with armed groups, including a number of children who were demobilized before their units were sent to eastern Congo in June 2004.

4. A number of GDRC military and civilian officials respond quickly and helpfully to NGO and UN agency requests for assistance with child protection issues. For example, MONUC child protection officers have worked with prison officials to remove children from general prison populations, and military commanders have assisted in demobilizing children associated with armed groups. In addition, earlier this year, judicial authorities in South Kivu started legal proceedings against a known child soldier recruiter.

5. The national disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) technical committee is working with UN agencies, donors and NGOs to ensure that the needs of children associated with armed groups are adequately addressed in the national World Bank-funded DDR plan. The section of the national DDR plan associated with children will be the first implemented.

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